DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 212 SO 023 079

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TITLE Education and Human Rights Violation in Guyana. Texas Papers on Latin America. Pre-publication Working Papers of the Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Texas at Austin. Paper No. 90-03.
INSTITUTION Texas Univ., Austin. Inst. of Latin American Studies.
REPORT NO ISSN-0892-3507
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 26p.
AVAILABLE FROM Office of Outreach, Institute of Latin American Studies, Sid Richardson Hall 1.310, University of Texas, Austin, TX 78712.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Civil Liberties; Educational Objectives; Foreign Countries; *Government School Relationship; Higher Education; Outcomes of Education; Propaganda; *Student Development
IDENTIFIERS *Guyana

ABSTRACT

Education plays a central role in contemporary social development and change. The educational system in a given society assumes a major role in human development by making available to the individual the necessary equipment for interfacing with the network of social relations. In both developed and developing countries, education increasingly has been considered an essential individual right. The situation in Guyana illustrates the issue of human rights violation in education. There, despite the Compulsory Education Act of 1876, an entrenched plantation system obstructed the growth of mass education until after 1940. More recently, a deep and chronic economic crisis has forced a reduction in social spending in Guyana, particularly in the area of education. At the same time, the government has replaced meaningful instructional programs with military training and mass games of dubious educational content in the interest of promoting ideological and propaganda goals. Guyana compares poorly with its Carribean neighbors in academic achievement, and enrollment has fallen over time. Human rights violations exist in virtually every aspect of the Guyanese educational system. Malnutrition is severe among students and transportation to and from schools is lacking. In developing countries, and in Guyana in particular, where masses of people are engaged in the business of survival, there is little margin for contributing to the enrichment of society. A 42-item list of references is attached. (LBG)

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TEXAS PAPERS ON LATIN AMERICA

Pre-publication working papers of the
Institute of Latin American Studies
University of Texas at Austin

ISSN 0892-3507

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Introduction

Education plays a central role in the process of contemporary social development and change. It has become an indispensable requirement for the reproduction of social life, and has come to be viewed as perhaps the principal institution in society for preparing youth to assume adult roles. One tradition within sociology maintains that education is one of the most important indicators of the extent to which a society has moved from the stage of traditionalism to modernity (Inkeles and Smith 1974). Schools provide access to knowledge and information that are not made available by other social institutions. This knowledge and information are a precondition for the individual to develop an awareness of the environment in which his/her life is being shaped. In order to function as a constituent part of society, the individual is compelled to grasp the complexity of social relations on which cultural life is based. Consequently, the educational system in a society assumes a major role in human growth and development by making available to the individual the necessary equipment for interfacing with the network of social relations (UN Report 1985).

In both developed industrial countries and developing countries, education has been increasingly considered an essential right of the individual. Universal mass education has been made a fundamental goal, and has been accorded a high social priority in many countries. In some, such as the newly independent postcolonial countries, the demands of their development programs have dictated that education be expanded on a mass scale. In the wake of the postwar decolonization process, the national states that emerged embarked on a strategy to eliminate the legacy of educational underdevelopment bequeathed by colonialism. Tremendous effort has been directed toward the development of the educational infrastructure necessary to enhance the development of the educational status of the population. Consequently, in the post-1940s and especially during the 1960s, there was a sharp focus on the expansion of school enrollment at the primary and secondary levels.

In the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948, education is declared a basic right of all people (Article 26). In addition, the right to education is

integrally related to another human right—to freely participate in the cultural life of the community (Art. 27). Specifically, Articles 26 and 27 state:

> Article 26: (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit; (2) education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace; (3) parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

> Article 27: (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits; (2) everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is author.

This paper examines the issue of human rights violation in education, particularly that which may have resulted from a specific pattern of economic development and an educational policy emanating therefrom.

The political economy of education in Guyana, a former British colony, amply illustrates these issues. Thus, despite the Compulsory Education Act of 1876, the most rapid expansion of its educational system was experienced only during the three decades after 1940 (Bacchus 1980). Bacchus has further pointed out that the class and social structure of the plantation system severely restricted the development of a mass education system. The nature of plantation labor did not impose any demand on the planters to provide education for their workers. In fact, to elevate the educational status of the workers on the plantation was inconsistent with the planters' need to exercise control over their labor supply.

The educational system remained extremely underdeveloped during the period before World War II, and fundamentally reflected the backwardness of the productive forces in what was a preindustrial plantation economy (Samaroo 1977). The colonial

education system was tailored to the needs of the plantation economy that was based on an agrarian sector that relied mainly on unskilled and manual labor. This system negated the development of a skilled labor force on a mass scale; consequently, the educational system during this period did not evolve along lines that promoted mass education. With industrialization as the core of the postcolonial development strategy, the problem of human resource development arose as a consequence of the rapid growth of the industrial sector, and the associated growth in the demand for an industrial wage-labor force (Lewis 1950). It has been necessary to expand the educational infrastructure in order to ensure an adequate supply of trained workers.

With the breakup of the old plantation system and the social structure that rested on it, education became functional to the process of social mobility and class formation, and was critical to the mass political participation necessary for the growth of a democracy. With the rapid rise of the capitalist wage-employment as the main form of employment, the worker is compelled to acquire education in order to secure the requirements of economic livelihood. The postcolonial development of Guyana is in this respect similar to the postindustrial revolution in Britain, which made education an essential condition for the development of the wage-labor force. Also, the rise of political parties presupposed the rise of some kind of mass education system in which the workers could receive schooling consistent with the functioning of the institutions of democracy. The right of the worker to a job, or economic security, becomes inextricably linked to the right to education.

In recent times, Guyana has been characterized by a deep and chronic economic crisis with enormous social and political consequences. This has given rise to substantial adjustments in the pattern of government expenditure along lines that have reduced the amount of resources deployed in the sphere of social services. Among the social services severely affected, education assumes an important place, especially given its role in cultural development. The problem that arises is one involving not only the inability of the Guyanese state to ensure that the population secure adequate means of education, but the ultimate problem concerning the conditions of economic backwardness and underdevelopment in Guyana. This question, as well as the more recent development process, has been discussed in other places (Mandle 1982; Thomas 1984).

Underdevelopment and Human Welfare: Theoretical Issues

To develop an adequate appreciation for the problem of human rights violation as it relates to education in an economically backward society, it is necessary to proceed from some general understanding of the problem of human welfare in such a historical and social setting. We attempt to formalize the question by posing it within the framework of the political economy of underdevelopment and human welfare. This will allow us to have some theoretical foundation from which to examine the specific historical conditions as they exist in Guyana.

As a starting point, one observes that a society's capacity to provide its members with an adequate supply of the means of human subsistence—food, clothing, shelter, health, and education—is the precondition for any acceptable level of human welfare. The actual living standards that prevail in any given society and at any given time are fundamentally dictated by the extent of the social surplus generated by the productive process. This is clear from the stylized facts of economic development and poverty on a global scale, as well as the regional disparities that exist within countries. The unequal global distribution of wealth and income, and the vast differentials in living standards between societies to a large extent reflect the unequal size of the surplus that they have at their disposal (World Bank 1982).

At the same time, it must be seen that, while the size of the surplus sets the absolute limit on the overall living standard in a society, the relative living standards between different sectors of that society are systematically related to the prevailing distribution mechanism. Hence, one observes that countries with approximately equal surplus are characterized by different patterns of inequality in living standards between social groups. The problem of human welfare maintenance is essentially predicated on the more general problem of social and economic development.

Discussing the problem of economic backwardness and underdevelopment in the Third World countries, Joan Robinson concluded: "The general effect of the remnants of quasi-feudalism that remain in the Third World is to retard both the growth of output and the development of a humane society" (1979, p. 47). Under historical conditions where feudalism did not actually appear as a mode of production, other precapitalist forms of economy and social relations formed the basis for colonial exploitation. The well-known system of plantation economy based on slave-labor formed the basic structural conditions for the economic backwardness and underdevelopment in the southern United States and many Third World countries

(Amin 1974). The further intrusion of capitalist forms of economy during the postcolonial phase of development served to compound the already existing contradictions in those economies. The demographic factor stands out sharply in this regard, as manifested in the wholesale displacement of masses of rural laborers without the preconditions for their reabsorption into wage-employment.

In this connection, the central theoretical proposition that informs our discussion is that human rights violation is ultimately the result of conditions of economic backwardness and underdevelopment that produce a pattern of surplus allocation benefiting a small social sector to the exclusion of others. The use of the limited surplus is functional to the political requirements of the ruling elites, and specifically to the reproduction of their own social power. That is, human rights are essentially rooted in the needs for the self-development of the individual, a process that is fundamentally a reflection of the actual conditions of material economic development. Human rights violation arises from a specific set of social and economic conditions that may be said to constitute a social crisis in which those human needs are negated.

Universal mass education, while it has been identified as an important social goal in many developing countries, mainly as an aspect of an overall national development agenda, may not be realizable. The phenomenon of economic backwardness and underdevelopment, and specifically the class relations that correspond to it, serves to lower the social priority that education is accorded by the state. The pattern of equality in the provision of education between social groups is dictated by the prevailing conditions of class formation and development, as manifested in forms of social differentiation and polarization. Robinson noted,

> Inequality in the provision of essential services has been cemented into the class structure of would-be developing nations as firmly as inequality in the consumption of luxury goods has been embedded in the structure of production. It would need an even greater wrench to redirect education to the benefit of society as a whole than to redirect industry to the requirements of mass consumption. (1979, p. 141)

In this respect, the patterns of economic and social relations that have been historically evolved play an extremely important role in shaping forms of inequality.

Under conditions where a small oligarchy exercises control over the economic surplus, the pattern of distribution of that surplus may be inconsistent with the

advancement of human welfare of the society as a whole. The state becomes an important instrument for effecting an unequal distribution of economic benefits, which violates the human welfare of significant sectors of the society. This phenomenon is perhaps most highly developed under conditions of economic backwardness and underdevelopment. In countries where such conditions prevail, the social structure is typically characterized by the existence of a small elite integrated into the state apparatus, directly or indirectly, and a class of wageworkers and small independent producers whose economic welfare is dictated by the vagaries of economic development and the policy of the state.

In order to ensure the reproduction of the existing economic and class relations, the state is compelled to adopt policies inevitably resulting in the deprivation of some sectors of society of the means to advance their welfare. This situation arises particularly during a sharp socioeconomic crisis, when the state becomes severely constrained by the conjuncture of material poverty and the attendant class and social antagonisms. The requirement of promoting the interests of the elite classes necessarily comes into deep conflict with any policy that seeks to advance the human welfare of society as a whole (Amin 1974; Bodenheimer 1971; Dos Santos 1970; Furtado 1964; Thomas 1984).

Education and Forms of Social Reproduction in Guyana

A. Slavery and the Negation of Mass Education

The system of education under the colonial slave-plantation system in Guyana fundamentally reflected the existing conditions of social and economic development. Specifically, it conformed to the requirements of the reproduction of slave labor as the basic form of labor, and the class relations that characterized the colonial formation. Labor on the slave plantation was unskilled and confined to purely manual activity. It was therefore not in the interest of the planters to provide education for their slaves. Indeed, it was not encouraged because education for the slaves was perceived as a dangerous instrument in their hands since "reading provokes thought and a thinking slave is a danger" (Daly 1966).

The interests of the local slave oligarchy, both immediate and long-term, stood in sharp opposition to the educational development of the slaves. Consequently, the development of mass education under slavery was negated inasmuch as it was irrelevant from the standpoint of the logic of slavery itself. The education system that

emerged under slavery was designed exclusively for the education of the children of the planters, and ensured the reproduction of the plantation oligarchic class and social structure in Guyana.

B. Postslavery and Mass Education

With the abolition of slavery and the growth of a free population, it became clear that some system of education was essential to the stability of postemancipation Guyana. The Negro Education Act of 1934 provided for elementary education first through the religious organizations, and later through the state apparatus. The aim of the British government was clear: to ensure the socialization of the freed slaves into "a love of employment," an essential condition for the development of a disciplined and "morally responsible" wage-labor force. The Sterling report (1835) was unequivocal:

> About 770,000 persons have been released from slavery by the Emancipation Act and are now in a state of rapid transition to entire freedom. . . . The peace and prosperity of the Empire at large may be not remotely influenced by their moral condition, the care of this is in itself also a matter of grave responsibility . . . performance of the functions of a laboring class in a civilized community will depend entirely on the power over their minds . . . the law having already determined and enforced their civic right, the task of bettering their condition can be further advanced only by education. (Gordon 1963, p. 20)

The need for education must be seen in the context of the development of the productive forces, the expansion of the state apparatus, and the rise of commerce and trade. By 1876, the Compulsory Education Act was passed to promote the development of elementary schools for training the wage-labor force then being formed. The subsequent pattern of educational development reflected the changing needs of the plantation economy and the colonial system, while at the same time it ensured the restricted social mobility of the masses.

C. Post-1940 Development in Guyanese Education

Profound changes occurred in Guyana's educational system following the second world war and the widespread mass upsurges throughout the British colonies in the Caribbean. These changes were largely the result of two distinct but related factors:

(1) internal political pressures and (2) an economic imperative that was linked to the growing influence of the United States in the Caribbean after World War II. As was the case with many of the other British colonies in the Caribbean, Guyana was entering what was fundamentally a new phase of national development.

The available data show the rapid growth of educational expenditure after 1945, as well as the expansion in the enrollment at all levels of the educational system. According to Baksh (1979), in 1945 educational expenditure was 11 percent of total government recurrent expenditure; increased to 15 percent in 1960 under the PPP; increased further to 17.06 percent in 1967 under the PNC, but declined to 12.77 in 1976. As correctly pointed out by Bacchus,

> political developments occurring after the mid-1940s, such as the extension of the franchise and the increasing substitution of popularly elected representatives for nominated members in the Legislative Assembly, also made the political system more responsive to popular demands. The combination of these forces, increasing popular demand for education and an elected Government more responsive to these popular demands resulted in a rapid increase by the Government in the number of its educational institutions located throughout the country at all levels of the system. (1980, p. 2)

Apart from the political factor, the structural changes that were envisaged in the economy made it necessary to "enlarge the supply of trained manpower for the emergent nation." Before this shift in the economic structure there was no compelling force for educational change. As Bacchus puts it,

> the general unavailability of secondary education for the masses up to the 1940s, despite the Compulsory Education Act of 1876, was largely due to the interest of the planters in ensuring an adequate supply of manual labor in the country. They were very reluctant to see education becoming an instrument of upward social mobility for children of the lower orders. This fact was reflected in their attitude to education for the children of the slaves, the ex-slaves and later the East Indian workers on the sugar estates. (P. 29)

The social and economic changes in Guyana made education an important instrument of social mobility, especially as the forms of economic reproduction became modified with the rapid growth of industrial capital.

Contemporary Trends in Guyana's Political Economy

Several scholars have devoted considerable effort and time to the analysis of the problem of development and poverty in the less developed countries (LDCs). It has been observed that along with the rapid growth of the industrial sectors in these countries has been the systematic marginalization of some social sectors and groups over time (Amin 1974). This has given rise to the inability of a substantial sector of the population to reproduce itself at socially acceptable standards. A significant fraction of the society is deprived of adequate food, clothing, and shelter—the basic or biological requirements for human survival—not to mention the basis for human welfare.

The salient features of the contemporary forms and process of social development in Guyana have been examined in several places (Mandle 1982; Thomas 1984). Clive Thomas, examining the structural and social relations in Guyana at the time of its independence in 1966, concluded that they indicated the economy "displayed signs of poverty, poor housing, underdeveloped medical services, inadequate educational services, backward communication facilities, and a dearth of recreational facilities" (p. 78). This situation was fairly stereotypical of countries that emerged out of a colonial mode of development reflecting the conditions of economic backwardness and underdevelopment characteristic of that historical experience.

As a result of the global economic crisis that started in the mid-1970s, Guyana entered a phase of chronic economic stagnation with all of its social consequences. The effect of this economic stagnation was to generate the conditions for internal social and political instability. Major political realignments and reforms were required to resolve this rapidly accelerating crisis. Beginning with the nationalization of the bauxite industry in 1972, the Guyanese state expanded its sphere of influence into significant areas of the national economy. This included the trade, distribution, transportation, communications, and mining sectors, which were brought under public-sector control. It was estimated that roughly 80 percent of the economy was in the hands of the state by 1977. At the core of the thrust toward what the government described as a "cooperative socialist" society was the attempt to deal with the

deterioration in the living standards of the Guyanese masses, which threatened the foundation of any sustained development of human welfare.

An examination of the available empirical data reveals that between 1970 and 1980 Guyana experienced a sharp decline in overall national output, and an especially sharp decline in critical income-generating sectors. Dried bauxite production, the major subsector in the mining and quarrying sector, fell from 2,290 thousand tons in 1970 to 637 thousand tons in 1981. When it is considered that this sector accounts for some 16.5 percent of Guyana's gross domestic product and a significant share of foreign exchange earnings, the implications for the economy become clearer. The foreign exchange crisis that developed in the late 1970s has been a pivotal factor in the recent political economy in Guyana.

The persistent inability of the Guyanese economy to accumulate adequate foreign exchange earnings has forced it to adopt what may be described as the IMF path of economic development. Under this regime, the Guyanese economy had to implement policies that entailed a reduction in subsidies, abolition of price controls (except for wages), cuts in imports and social spending, and the devaluation of the currency. This development path has had tremendous implications for human welfare and, in particular, education. With the chronic economic stagnation and rising unemployment, the state lowers the priority on education, since a growing educated work force with rising job expectations proves highly problematic for the maintenance of social stability in the country. As a result of this development debacle, the Guyanese working people have experienced a dramatic deterioration in their living standards.

Manifestations of Human Rights Violation in Education

A. General Conditions and Poor Quality Education

In order to understand and perhaps appreciate human rights violation by way of "education," and specifically as it relates to Guyana, we need to grasp the spirit of the Human Rights Declaration of 1948, in particular Arts. 26 and 27. Both articles encourage literacy and an aesthetic appreciation for a sense of culture—the ability to evolve a consciousness of one's social environment in order to have an effect on it, and perhaps more important, to enjoy what is considered to be a standard of life appropriate to civilized human existence.

It is in this context that we view education not merely as the number of persons enrolled in schools. While the level of enrollments is a precondition for a person to

acquire formal education, more important is the extent to which that person can actually attend classes and learn from the educational process. In this connection, the issue of health becomes a central part of the question of education. Simply put, a young person cannot be expected to develop knowledge if there is a problem of health, for instance, lack of adequate nutrition. If this is accepted as reasonable, then inclusive in the assessment of educational standards and the quality of education are the actual economic conditions of the school population. In the case of a country such as Guyana, this assumes paramount significance. Along with the often recited statistics on enrollments, dropout rates, test scores, and so on, must be considered the cost of school attendance, the health of those eligible for school, the availability of adequate transportation, unemployment, underemployment, and overall living conditions.

The chronic economic crisis that emerged during the 1970s has imposed tremendous constraints on the state vis-à-vis the realization of universal mass education. Thomas (1984) observed that between 1970 and 1980, educational expenditure declined from 15 to 12 percent of total government expenditure, while during the same period, the allocation to payment of the public debt rose from 14 to 44 percent. There was also a corresponding growth of the national debt from G$267.2 million to G$3,040.6 over the same ten-year period. Spinner (1984) noted that the national debt rose to G$1.8 in 1984. Overambitious schemes eroded the maintenance of basic public utilities (Bacchus 1980; Hintzen and Premdas 1983; Spinner 1984; Thomas 1984). Spinner described the infrastructure of Guyanese society as one in which the electricity supply, water systems, sewerage, and public transportation were on the verge of total collapse. This has compounded the existing socioeconomic difficulties of families to provide the personal support for their children to acquire education (UN Report 1985).

The IMF agreement of 1978 entailed substantial cuts in public spending, which in part accounted for the unemployment rate of 26 percent, and underemployment of 40 percent by 1980. After an in-depth investigation of the government's slogan of "Socialism and Basic Needs in Guyana," Guy Standing in an ILO report commented, "If the working class are not in a position to determine the pattern of production they are not likely to be prepared to make the material sacrifices and take the initiative and effort required to develop the economy" (Standing and Szal 1979). The government budget of 1980 allocated 37 percent for debt payments and 32 percent for salaries and allowances, leaving only 31 percent for all other expenditures (Spinner 1984).

By 1986 unemployment was estimated at more than 30 percent. The government nevertheless provided even higher salaries for major political leaders, key bureaucrats and senior officials of the Guyanese Defense Force, and police and paramilitary groups to guarantee its political loyalty (Hintzen 1986). In a real sense, the Guyanese government is one that maintains itself on the basis of bribery, corruption, fraud, and repression at the expense of the Guyanese workers and the poor.

Spinner (1984) concluded that "education, health, and housing of working-class Guyanese continue to deteriorate. Schools are overcrowded, independent teachers are fired and the government concentrates on indoctrination rather than education" (p. 201). The shortage of basic drugs and medical supplies forced doctors in Guyana to conclude a memorandum to the Minister of Health with, "(this situation) make(s) meaningful health care difficult if not impossible" (Spinner 1984).

One report on human rights violation in Guyana, Human Rights Commission (1981), noted that since 1976 the exacerbation of the economic crisis has contributed to a rapid deterioration of the educational system. According to this report,

> having assumed control of all education in 1975 under the slogan of "free education from nursery to university" the government found itself unable to maintain previous standards. . . . the physical deterioration of school buildings and grounds together with shortages of essential items such as textbooks, books and laboratory materials have produced slum-like quality in all schools, even those which were the premier schools in the country. (P. 36)

It has also been observed that emphasis on academic training has been replaced by what is considered to be dubious educational content that is in accord with the government's ideological and propaganda goals such as agricultural production, work-study programs, mass games, and military training programs. In addition, direct and indirect political interference in education is said to exist at all levels of that social institution.

An important feature of the Guyanese state that must be considered is its role in the process of class formation and the overall political economy of Guyanese development. Thomas (1984) argues that the state functions as an instrument of class formation, as opposed to functioning simply as an instrument of one or the other class formation. He suggests that "co-operative socialism" was "an ideological

rationalization of state capitalism in Guyana and for the creation of a new class of indigenous capitalists, 'fathered' in the first instance by the state." The ruling clique came to power outside of the arena of free democratic elections, and lacks legitimacy. Consequently, it is compelled to adopt fascist forms of political rule to maintain itself in the context of an internal crisis that was accelerated by the global crisis.

Chandisingh (1983) concluded,

> The deepening of the conflict between the working classes and the state has made it necessary to allocate even more resources to nonproductive activity necessary to creating the social conditions which would allow the ruling class to maintain political power. (P. 71)

This is reflected in the tremendous growth in the military and bureaucracy in Guyana during the post 1970s. According to the 1982 World Military Report, military expenditure as a percentage of GNP rose from 1.7 percent in 1973 to 8.1 percent in 1976, and from 3.9 percent to 10.8 percent of central government expenditures during the same period. This seems consistent with the thrust toward the militarization of the society in the absence of any stable popular base for maintaining political power (U.S. Control and Disarmament Agency 1982).

Hintzen (1986) further noted that the requirements for the survival of the Guyanese political regime within the prevailing conjuncture of socioeconomic crisis compel it to disregard fulfilling the collective needs of the society. The chronic economic crisis has resulted in a rapid degeneration of socioeconomic conditions in the society. As Hintzen puts it,

> Thus, considerations of equity and social security, as defined at the beginning of this chapter, have no place in regime policy which is geared toward maintaining the system of coercion and control and sustaining the loyalty of the country's strategic elite. (1986, p. 289)

Human welfare considerations must be seen, therefore, to be intricately tied up with the inner dynamics of the political and social motion in the society. In the context of Guyana, the state apparatus becomes the focal point of this dynamic.

Given the conditions as discussed above, under which only a fortunate sector of the youth population attends primary and some secondary school, it should not be surprising that Guyanese scored the worst on the Caribbeanwide examinations. The Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) results for 1982 shown in table 1 illustrate the effects of the accumulated crisis since 1976 on the state of education.

Table 1. CXC Results 1982

Subject	*General* (G) *Basic* (B)	*Number Entered*	*% Passes*	*% Failures*	*Rating in Caribbean Pass Rate*
English A	(G)	5,104	32.28	67.72	Lowest
	(B)	1,133	31.66	68.34	Second from lowest
English B	(G)	1,373	40.44	59.50	Lowest-only country w/PR lower than 60%
History	(G)	27	45.16	54.84	Lowest-only country w/PR lower than 70%
	(B)	15	14.54	85.46	Lowest
Math	(G)	3,678	44.93	45.07	Lowest
	(B)	1,399	11.50	88.50	Second from lowest
Spanish	(G)	320	35.39	64.61	Second lowest
	(B)	137	26.36	73.64	Fourth from lowest
Social Studies	(G)	32	57.48	42.52	Second lowest
	(B)	32	46.88	53.12	Second lowest

The examination results show Guyana's performance to be the worst. The average passing rate in any subject was 35 percent, with basic mathematics being as low as 11 percent and social studies at the general level being highest with 57 percent. In absolute terms, it is also deplorable when compared to Guyana's performances several years ago (*Catholic Standard*, September 4, 1983) and the small number of young people in Guyana who are being registered for public examinations compared to the much larger numbers in other Caribbean territories (Guyana Human Rights Commission 1981).

With respect to these results, the Guyanese Human Rights Report (1983) noted that "the inadequate allocations to education, should, however, take second place to the politicizing of the educational system in any assessment of the present situation" (p.

36). The needs of the ruling party have been placed above the welfare of the pupils, the professionalism of the teacher, and the integrity of the administrators. The report cites the transformation of schools into political units and the annual Mass Games, which occupy three months of the time of students and staff taking part in them, as forms of child exploitation. These, along with many occasions when children have to attend party rallies and events for visiting dignitaries, make serious inroads into available time for normal academic pursuits.

B. Enrollments, Dropouts, Attendance, and Expenditures

Factors such as enrollments, attendance, and dropouts are perhaps more useful for determining the overall level of mass education. However, we wish to note that in the less developed countries, there is the tendency to overstate the positives and understate the negatives. UNESCO (1983) reported that between 1960 and 1980 there was a 139 percent increase in primary education; as a result, primary education increased from 60 percent in 1960 to 86 percent in 1980. There is a caveat to the interpretation that primary education enrollments are rising meteorically in developing countries. The 1983 UNESCO report noted that enrollments in the less developed countries are generally exaggerated to the tune of 12–14 percent. Further, the report concluded that primary school enrollment in 1980 (net of repetition) corresponds to about 75 percent of the "real" population of primary school age. The report also observed that the 1980s ushered in rather discouraging signs in the persistent high level of dropout rates in the backward economic sectors. The report estimated that on average, fewer than eight of every ten pupils commencing school in the late 1970s would reach Grade 4 of primary education. On this point, the report concluded that "should the promotion, repetition and dropout rates observed at this time, remain constant, the corresponding survival rates for primary education in the Caribbean would be about 66 percent" (p. 2).

Table 2 shows school enrollment and attendance statistics for several years between the period of 1950 to 1983. The table reveals an overall increase in enrollments, average attendance, as well as an increasing percentage in attendance. However, when we consider the UNESCO (1983) reservations, these figures are not as impressive. Indeed, when adjustments are made, the results seem to concur with the report that enrollment in the Caribbean by the 1980s would be about only 66 percent.

Table 2. Enrollment and Attendance Statistics, 1950–1983

Year	*Enrollment*	*Average Attendance*	*Attendance as a %-Age of Enrollments*
1950	74,153	59,619	80.3
1960	125,345	103,788	82.8
1965	146,494	117,342	80.1
1970	162.842	127,342	86.9
1974	175,786	132,063	75.1
1980	211,838**	195,721	92.4
1983	215,838	193,396	89.6

Sources: Mandle (1973), *The Plantation Economy*, table 29; Samaroo (1977) Unpublished dissertation, table 14; Baksh (1979), *Formal Education and the Guyanese Social Structure*, pp. 118–119; Bacchus (1980), *Education for Development or Underdevelopment*, table 16.

In spite of this, we should explain that even UNESCO's estimate of 66 percent enrollment could be misleading. In most Third World countries influenced by slavery and the plantation economy, the masses have always placed great importance on acquiring education. Bacchus (1980) noted,

> Even though social mobility was difficult, and for the majority of the black population well nigh impossible, education held out some promise of social advancement and gave its recipients the hope, unrealistic though it might have been for the great majority, of rising somewhat up the social and economic ladder. While this was not the purpose of education as conceived by the planters, it nonetheless became the most important one of the ex-slave who came to value education mainly as an instrument of upward social mobility. (P. 72)

The point here is that even though unemployment rates and inflation are high, and the economy is experiencing an overall crisis, parents will initially enroll their children for primary school. The question becomes one of how long will the poorer Guyanese remain in school; it seems reasonable to conclude that they will remain in school as

long as education at the primary level is accessible as far as cost. If, however, government expenditures for education generally, and primary education specifically, tend to decrease over time, one likely result is less government support for poorer students. One of the probable consequences of reduced educational expenditures coupled with high unemployment, then, is that dropout rates will rise (Human Rights Report 1983). That is, because of tradition and cultural expectations, at the beginning of each academic year parents enroll their children, thus giving rise to high enrollments. But with time, this is offset by high dropout rates due to cost considerations for schooling. Simply put, how long a child in Guyana stays in school, even at the primary level, is a function of government support as well as his/her social background.

Support for this seems to come from the reduced expenditure on education by the government. As noted earlier, educational expenditure as a percentage of total recurrent expenditure was 12.2 percent in 1945; this rose to 15 percent in 1960, and increased further to 17.06 percent in 1967, but by 1976 had decreased to 12.77 percent (Baksh 1979). Spinner (1984) observed that 1978 unemployment was 25 percent while underemployment stood at 40 percent; by 1979 inflation had increased by 18 percent. By 1980 he noted that 10 percent of the government's budget was for security forces, while 5 percent was for health services. Finally, the Guyanese Human Rights Association, issuing its report for the period between July 1981 and August 1982 noted that "social and public services have deteriorated rapidly, and the health and educational systems have been harshly affected by economic collapse" (p. 203).

It is interesting and somewhat revealing when we look at enrollments, and enrollments as a percentage of relevant age group population of primary school pupils between the ages of 5 and 14 years. Both Bacchus (1980) and Baksh (1979) noted that in 1946 the enrollment in primary school stood at 63,064 with 72.2 percent of the relevant age population, but by 1960 they were increased to 123,348 and 77.8 percent; there was a further increase to 138,674 and 95.2 percent by 1967. However, by 1973, both enrollments and the percentage of the relevant age group began to decline with 132,023 enrollments and only 77 percent by 1977. By 1974 there was a further decline to 132,063 enrollments, which represented 75.1 percent of the relevant age group.

Table 3. Labor Force Participation by Levels of Education—1977

Educational Level	*Percentage Not in Labor Force*
No Education	71.0
Lower Primary	48.4
Upper Primary	48.3
Lower Secondary	40.7
Upper Secondary	21.3

Source: Baksh (1979), *Formal Education and Social Structure* (table 1, p. 120).

These falling rates in enrollments over time seem consistent with the composition of the labor force by 1977, thus giving some glimpses of the lack of social relevance of the curriculum insofar as the reality of development or lack thereof of the educational system. From table 3, we can infer that a significant fraction of the unemployed is without any formal primary education. Even more important, the table suggests that those with some education, and even some of those who actually complete their secondary education are outside the active labor force and thus unable to participate in the economic life of the society. Baksh (1979) argues that this contradiction can be explained by the fact that, while the Guyanese government was preparing its young citizens for the modern sector, Guyana being a dependent capitalist economy was not able to utilize its productive force, but instead had to rely heavily on foreign imports from the center economies as opposed to developing its own domestic productive base. To quote Baksh, "The main apparent reason for this paradoxical situation is that while the local decision-makers were able to exercise control over the educational system, the economy was under the direct and indirect control of various metropolitan states" (p. 116).

What emerges from the foregoing discussion is a line of argument pointing to human rights violation in education at two levels: (1) the actual deterioration in the quality of education, and (2) unacceptable levels of school attendance. On the one hand, we argued that as a result of the economic, and specifically the fiscal, crisis, the Guyanese state has been unable to maintain socially acceptable standards of mass education, as reflected in the state of disrepair of school buildings and the shortage of vital school supplies. On the other hand, the worsening economic conditions marked by growing

unemployment, rising costs of living, and mass impoverishment have prevented many Guyanese families from providing the personal support required for their children's education.

Conclusion

This paper seeks to locate forms of human rights violation in education within the context of the contemporary political economy of Guyana. The rapid militarization of Guyanese society in recent times and the systematic destruction of human rights in virtually all spheres of life in Guyanese society have been fairly well documented in the press (*Caribbean Contact*, October 1982) as well as by regional and international human rights organizations, which have reported on the seriousness of the situation that developed in Guyana since the mid-1970s (Guyana Human Rights Commission 1982, 1983; U.S. Department of State 1982). In this paper, we attempted to identify the forms in which human rights violations in education may be said to occur, and to explore the underlying conditions of the Guyanese political economy that may have accounted for them.

We have sought to anchor our presentation within the framework that, although mass education is generally an important social goal in many developing countries, as an aspect of an overall national agenda it may not be realizable. Our discussion has rested on two central propositions. First, in order to ensure the reproduction of the existing economic and class relations, the state is compelled to adopt policies that can only result in the deprivation of some sectors of society of the means to advance their welfare. This situation arises particularly during a sharp socioeconomic crisis, when the state becomes severely constrained by the conjuncture of material poverty and the attendant class and social antagonism. The requirement of promoting the interest of the elite classes necessarily comes into conflict with any policy to raise the level of human welfare of the society as a whole.

Second, the requirements for the survival of the Guyanese political regime with the prevailing socioeconomic crises compels the government to disregard fulfilling the collective needs of the society. Thus, the question of equity and promises of mass education have no place in regime policy, which is geared toward perpetuating itself through coercion and control as well as sustaining the loyalty of the country's strategic elite. Human welfare considerations must be seen, therefore, to be intricately tied up with the inner dynamics of the political and social motion of the society. As we have

illustrated, in the context of Guyana, the state apparatus becomes the focal point of this dynamic.

We have found manifestations of human rights violations in virtually every aspect of the educational system, directly as well as indirectly. These manifestations reflect themselves in a variety of ways ranging from malnutrition of the young population and lack of transportation to and from schools to endorsement of absenteeism by the Guyanese government by way of mass games and political ceremonies, and the establishment of national service conscription as a prerequisite to graduation.

We are wont to observe that it is true that education, like health and social welfare services, is vulnerable to budgetary cuts, especially when economic crises occur. It can be argued that the level of repression and thus human rights violations stem in part from the inability of the Guyanese government to fully develop the productive forces in a manner that would allow for mass education, thereby excluding a significant part of this society's population from having an impact on their social systems.

In the final analysis, poverty and economic backwardness remain paramount hindrances to political, social, and economic progress. Where the masses of people, generally in the so-called Third World and Guyana in particular, are engaged in the very business of survival, there is little margin for contributing to the enrichment of society. Stark inequalities within as well as outside countries also diminish opportunities for mutually beneficial international cooperation.

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